



St. Matthew's 25 Challenge

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Jesus said, "When you did it to one of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Matt. 25:40

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Issue 1

REVIEWING THE PAST - REACHING FOR THE FUTURE

The last Sunday of December, we as a congregation, renewed our Baptismal vows and the first Sunday of the New Year, we participated in the Wesley Covenant Renewal Service. This is a great way to end one year and begin a new year. Covenant renewal services date back to a command in the Torah and have occurred throughout Judao-Christian history. John Wesley renewed this tradition for those of us who are Methodist. Why did Scripture command us to renew the covenant? Covenant is at the heart of our faith. It is an agreement between God and his people. In the agreement God vows to be with us and care for us and we agree to faithfully keep his commandments. Because we fail to keep those commandments, we need to continually renew our covenant with our God.

Traditionally, the beginning of a new year is a time to look back at what was done in the past and make plans for the future. When I look back over the years since I first came to St. Matthew's, there is much to celebrate. All we have to do is look around to see our paved parking lot and new doors to realize how much has been accomplished. Your trustees have also taken care of seeing that the church and rental houses are hooked up to city sewage. Financially we have made some great strides. In spite of economically difficult times our giving as a church has improved. We paid our Conference apportionments last year and I expect we will do the same for 2003. In addition, I hope we will be a part of the Rainbow Covenant. We have increased our outreach and mission giving significantly. We have also witnessed great spiritual growth in many of our adults and youths through God's Teens and Covenant Groups. God is truly

moving among us.

We now face a critical time in the history of St. Matthew's and decisions made this year will have a tremendous impact on the future of this church. A Pastor Parish Chairman in another church addressed his committee and Charge Conference a few years ago with these words, "We said we wanted to grow as a church and our pastor led us out of the valley to the top of a mountain to see where we could go and we have chosen to go back down the mountain into the same valley." Because of their lack of faith it took that church more than tens years before it finally made its way back up the mountain and on into a new phase of growth.

I believe we are facing the same kind of challenge at St. Matthew's. What will we do in the face of this challenge? A review of the 47-year history of St. Matthew's reveals a continuous struggle with finances. Every church has periods of financial challenges and difficulties from time to time. **When a church's financial struggles are continuous it indicates a problem with commitment to the covenant.**

Maybe we have forgotten that the Church belongs to God in Christ. People begin to think the church belongs to them and they rely on their own strength to meet its needs. When that doesn't work they start complaining and placing blame. When people are faithful to the covenant they made at their Baptism they put their trust in God and rely on Him to meet their needs and the needs of his Church. They choose to live up to their vows to support the Church with their prayers, presence, gifts and service. **When Tithing is the minimum standard of giving the church never struggles financially.** It is a matter of faith and commitment to the Covenant. This church would not have survived this long if it were not for those who

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have been faithful down through the years. We simply need to increase the number of those who are willing to be faithful to all of God's commands.

St. Matthew's has become an aging congregation. Many people who were regular in attendance when I came here are no longer as healthy as they once were. Sadly our attendance is down, and new younger families are not coming to visit our church. On the other hand we are not reaching out to these families in our community. We are not providing ministries they need like half day early childcare, after school tutoring or parenting classes. Our sister church, Cumberland UMC, was in trouble a few years ago and started these types of ministries and now has a budget larger than ours and a growing membership. We have been living for too long in the past and failed to reach out to our community effectively.

Pastor-Parish thinks we need to focus more on evangelism and outreach. I believe this is the right time for this ministry. It is time for the faithful at St. Matthew's to break with the past and look

toward to a new day of ministry for the future. We need to put financial struggles, complaining and blaming in the past where it belongs. We have finally arrived at a mountaintop and can see the wonderful possibilities God has in store for us if we rely on Him to lead us forward into the future he has promised for his church. Or, we can go back down the mountain to struggle as we have in the past. The prize belongs to the faithful. Like St. Paul, we must say, ***"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 3:13-14)

We have a clear mission and a vision for the future. Let us strive to be faithful in accomplishing what is set before us.

*Shalom,
Mike*

Our Mission was established by the risen Lord when he told us, "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have Commanded you;"; "be my witnesses" and "preach the gospel to the whole creation." Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8

Our Vision is for God's grace in Christ to transform our lives and Church through exciting, creative ministries that embody St. Matthew's 25 Challenge by faithfully serving the poor, hungry, naked, imprisoned, sick and strangers in our own community, as if ministering to Christ himself, for Jesus said, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Matthew 25:40

HANDS

By
Lynne Martin

*Hands gently cradling a newborn child
Hands patiently taming a garden wild
Hands lined and creased with use through the
years*

Hands calmly soothing a young one's fears.

*Hands worn and callused on the farmer's plow
Hands clasped, repeating their marriage vows
Hands folded quietly in reverent prayer
Hands opened, offering—a burden to bear.*



*Hands silently sharing a friend's deep grief
Hands firmly holding to strong beliefs
Hands lifted, rejoicing in a comrade's success
Hands reassuring the dejected and depressed.*

*Hands pledging allegiance to a flag so true
Hands supplying comfort to me and to you
These are the hands of my neighbors and friends.
These are the hands that help me begin again.*

Submitted by: Dorothy Spakes

ONE-BY-ONE & SENIORS COMPUTER CLASS

Schedules have been set for the Second Semester for all participants of the Monday and Thursday night programs. You will be notified if there are any changes. The same rule applies: If the Cumberland County Schools are closed for any reason, so are we. We are hoping for increased attendance in all program. Thanks to all who help us in our outreach missions at St. Matthew's.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

ONE-BY-ONE & SENIOR CLASS

Jan. - 12 & 26
Feb. - 2, 9 & 23
Mar. - 1, 8, 22 & 29
Apr. - 5, 19 & 26
May - 3 & 10

TEENS HELPING TEENS

Jan. - 15, 22 & 29
Feb. - 5, 12, 19 & 26
Mar. - 4, 18 & 25
Apr. - 1, 22 & 29
May - 6 & 13



We met December 21st for our regular monthly meeting. There were **13** men present. We were served a delicious breakfast by Marvin and Lynn Hiner and the Griffins.

Lynwood Griffin gave the devotion from John 1:1 & 2:11 which was about **Reflections**. A great topic for all of us to reflect on is our lifestyles. What kind of reflection do you make? Is God in your reflection? Good question!

Election of **New Officers** will be held at our next meeting on **January 18th**. All men are requested to attend January's meeting to help elect the men to lead us in **2004**.

As you read this, the men are in the kitchen preparing our Black-Eyed Peas, Collards, Ham and Cornbread Lunch. We hope you will all plan to attend. This is our annual **"New Year's Day Lunch"** and not a donation affair.

The new **Flashing Sign** for **Special Events** located in front of the church was on the business agenda. The Methodist Men agreed to pay \$400.00 for the sign and letters.

Thrift Shop Workers were assigned for **2004**. J.A. Sessoms volunteered to work on the 3rd Saturday of every month. We also assigned **Ushers** as of last year. If you would like to serve as an Usher, see Troy Willoughby, Wayne Everts or Bobby Lambert.

A **\$100.00** contribution was sent to the **Methodist Home for Children**. A **"Thank You Card"** was read from the St. Matthew's Youth for helping them in the year 2003. Julie Griffin thanked the men for their help in the **Mental Health Christmas Program**.

Troy Willoughby, UMM Secretary

BOOK CLUB NEWS:

The Book Club will meet on **January 31st** at **11:30 a.m.** at the **Pizza Palace**. We will be reading **"Gideon's Gift"** by **Karen Kingsbury**. This is a really small book to read and is available at the Public Library. We are hoping that more of you will join us.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



7 - Cathy Collins	23 - Nan Blehi
14 - Roxie Server	Betty Willoughby
15 - Joyce Christian	24 - Fred Rozier
18 - Brad Everts	25 - Eva Smith
21 - Mary Schneider	27 - Dustin Graham
22 - Debbie Hager	31 - Reed Rozier

METHODIST MEN PROJECT:

On December 13th, the Methodist Men mustered at the home of **Clarice Edge** to construct a **Handicapped Ramp**. The ramp was provided by the "**Cumberland County Council on Aging**". They contacted the church, who proceeded to contact Charles Lucas, who said we will build it. **Charles Lucas, Frank Bagley, Jack Spakes, Wayne Everts, Doug Stone, Troy Willoughby** and **Raymond Gray** were the workers. As the work progressed, the ladies of the church involved in "**Breakfast with Santa**" brought us Breakfast. **Lorri Shackelford** and **Amy-Jo Everts** delivered enough for all of us. Many thanks to them. Our work began around 8:00 a.m. and the last nail was driven around 2:00 p.m. We stood around for 10 minutes and admired our work. Our plan was to build it as prescribed by the Council on Aging which we did. Thanks to the men for this worthwhile project.

UMM ACTIVITIES FOR 2003:

JANUARY—Helped purchase "Fire Proof Filing Cabinet" & sponsored "Black-Eyed Sunday Lunch"

FEBRUARY—Sponsored "Sweetheart Banquet" with "Soggy Bottom Boys" & sponsored 2 Youth \$187.00 each for Avilla Retreat

MARCH—Reworked Storage Shed

APRIL—Helped Finance Ministry Team with Barbecue Sale & provided a Sausage Biscuit Breakfast for Sunrise Service

MAY—Sponsored Church Family Picnic, in charge of "Mother's Day Service" & "Choir" & painted Fellowship Hall Wing

JUNE— Sang in Choir on last Sunday, prepared meal for Vacation Bible School, prepared Father's Day Booklet & helped with Yard Sale

JULY—Sang in Choir on last Sunday

AUGUST—Donated \$175.00 toward Day Camp Scholarships & \$300.00 for Lawn Care Service

SEPTEMBER—Sold Barbecue Tickets

OCTOBER—Barbecue Sale

NOVEMBER—Gave \$300.00 to purchase TI 83 Plus & Ink Cartridges & donated Hams & Turkeys for Harvest Day Dinner

DECEMBER—Gave \$900.00 for 2004 Lawn Care Service, \$300.00 to Cumberland County Mental Health, \$100.00 to Frayed & Frazzled Flock, built Handicapped Ramp for Clarice Edge, \$400.00 for new Church Flashing Sign & provided Usher Teams for 9 months and the Youth had 3 months

SPECIAL OFFERINGS WERE GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING FROM:

EMERGENCY FUND

- ◆ Sunday Morning Bible Study Class
- ◆ Paul & Jewel Sharpe
- ◆ In honor of Erma Evans birthday by her Secret Prayer Partner
- ◆ Mary Sue Grady
- ◆ Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle
- ◆ In honor of Ruby Lucas by her Secret Pal
- ◆ God's Teens for families with children
- ◆ In honor of Gudrun Arnold's birthday by her Secret Pal
- ◆ Dejah Anderson for families with children
- ◆ In memory of Bill Parker from the Sunday Morning Bible Study Class

POWER BILL

- ◆ The Thrift Shop

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

- ◆ Wayne & Elaine Everts

LAWN CARE SERVICE

- ◆ The Thrift Shop

ARP FUND

- ◆ Marvin & Lynn Hiner

VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS are like **HENRY FORD...**

They have better ideas.

VOLUNTEERS are like **COKE...**

They're the real thing.

VOLUNTEERS are like **PAN AM...**

They make the going great.

VOLUNTEERS are like **PEPSI...**

They've got a lot to give.

VOLUNTEERS are like **DIAL SOAP...**

They care more. Don't you wish everybody did?

VOLUNTEERS are like **VO5 HAIR SPRAY...**

Their goodness holds in all kinds of weather.

VOLUNTEERS are like **HALLMARK CARDS...**

They care enough to give the very best.

VOLUNTEERS are like **STANDARD OIL...**

You expect more and you get it.

BUT MOST OF ALL.....

VOLUNTEERS are like **FROSTED FLAKES...**

THEY'RE GRREEAATT!!!!

Submitted by:
Dorothy Spakes

YOUTH REFLECTIONS FOR 2003

Our youth events started with a spiritual retreat at **Camp Rockfish** in January. Dr. Hale presented a few spiritual sessions on **Choosing Life**. Ms. Amy and Mr. Dan gave classes on etiquette for **Formal Dining** and **Formal Dancing**. Ms. Elaine and Mr. Wayne provided all the delicious meals. It was a great time.

As we continued our year, we were servers at the traditional **Sweetheart Banquet** and gave a powerful **Youth Service** in February. After our **Youth Service**, we all dined at **Cici's Pizza**. March included a **Breakfast Buffet** to raise money for our trip to **Summer Breakaway** in **Louisburg**. Many of the youth participated in **Youth Rally Day** at **NC Wesleyan College** in **Rocky Mount** chaperoned by Ms. Dawn and Ms. Lorri. The Youth had a **Car Wash** in May to also raise money for **Summer Breakaway**. We had two youth who graduated from High School and are now involved in **Christian Fellowship Groups** at their college.

The time finally arrived and **8** of our Youth participated in **Summer Breakaway**. Mr. Calvin, Ms. Cindy and Ms. Elaine provided our safe travel to our destination. Mr. Calvin, Ms. Dawn and Ms. Lorri had to listen to all our excitement about our week as they transported us back to Fayetteville. Some youth were so excited that they were ready to go back right away. Josh, Peter and Amy-Jo were blessed by also taking part in the **Annual Youth Conference** at **Methodist College**. Josh is now the **Fayetteville Representative** for the **Resolutions Committee**. Way to go Josh!!!

As the summer was approaching to an end, we were planning our **Back-To-School Dinner/Dance/Lock-in** for early in August. Mr. Calvin presented a powerful **Bible Study** and Ms. Lorri printed up our **Scavenger Hunt**. Mr. Dan and Mr. Wayne cooked our steaks to perfection. Ms. Sandy and Ms. Elaine served our meal. In September, we went to watch the **Football Game** at **Duke** and also listen to **Ernie Irvin** give an inspirational speech. Youth were chaperoned by Mr. Wayne Hager, Mr. Jeff, Mr. Wayne and Ms. Elaine. On **Homecoming Sunday**, our youth served a **Breakfast Buffet** with lots of help from all their parents. October we planned for our upcoming **Pilgrimage** at the **Crown Coliseum**.

Pilgrimage is a very exciting and spiritual time for our youth to celebrate their faith with several hundred other Methodist youth. During the daytime, we participated in **NO Hungry Neighbors Walk/Run**. We participated in a **Gleaning Project** by picking 60 bags of collard greens after lunch. Our youth have decided to be **Acolytes** as their way of serving the church as well as being **Ushers** during the year. They met with Dr. Hale and Ms. Elaine trying to decide how the program will be run and what types of robes would be used. To finish out the year, our youth sponsored an **Angel** from the **Angel Tree**. The youth went **Christmas Caroling** to our elderly, bringing with them a loaf of bread. They also were blessed to have a **Christmas Ball** with Mr. Kenny, Ms. Lorri, Mr. Doug and Ms. Dawn to chaperone.

Our youth would like to thank the congregation for all their support. We are very blessed to have a carrying church. We would also like to thank all the parents for all their support and time.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	2	3
4 Black-Eyed Lunch – 12:00 pm Church Ministry Council – 1:30 pm	5 NO One-By-One	6 Prayer Group – 6:30pm	7 Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	8 NO THT	9	10
11 Lay Leadership Training at Hay St. UMC-2:45-5:00pm	12	13 Prayer Group – 6:30pm	14 Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle - 11:00am Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	15	16	17
18 UMM Breakfast Mtg. – 8:30am	19 Martin Luther King Jr.'s. Birthday Observed CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED	20 Prayer Group – 6:30pm	21 Home Extensions-9:30am Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	22 THT – 7:00pm Help'N Hands-11am	23	24
25	26 NO One-By-One	27 Prayer Group – 6:30pm	28 Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	29 THT – 7:00pm	30	31 Book Club meets at Pizza Palace – 11:30 am
	One-By-One – 7:00pm	Prayer Group – 6:30pm	Card Ministry – 5:00pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice – 7:30pm	THT – 7:00pm		